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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the achievement of black Caribbean students in six British secondary schools with 10 percent or more black Caribbean students. Data collection included surveys and site visits that focused on curriculum, teaching and learning quality, monitoring of student performance, support and guidance for students, and links with parents and the community. Students of black Caribbean heritage generally achieved more than comparable students in other schools where they formed a high proportion of the school population. Extent of the schools' academic success varied. Results indicated that black Caribbean students can do well in good schools. Critical to the success of the schools were leadership and management that gained parents' and students' confidence and established their credibility with the community. Successful schools were committed to valuing and including students. Establishing high expectations was fundamental to the schools' work. Teachers had positive relationships with their students. Effective student support included close oversight of their academic and personal progress based on an incisive analysis of needs. Parent appreciated the schools' efforts. Students tended to be positive about the schools' high expectations and support. Recommendations include helping schools develop the sophistication to address ethnic diversity and improving connections between schools and other local services. An appendix contains data on the academic achievement of students in the 129 schools surveyed, including that of black Caribbean students. (SM)

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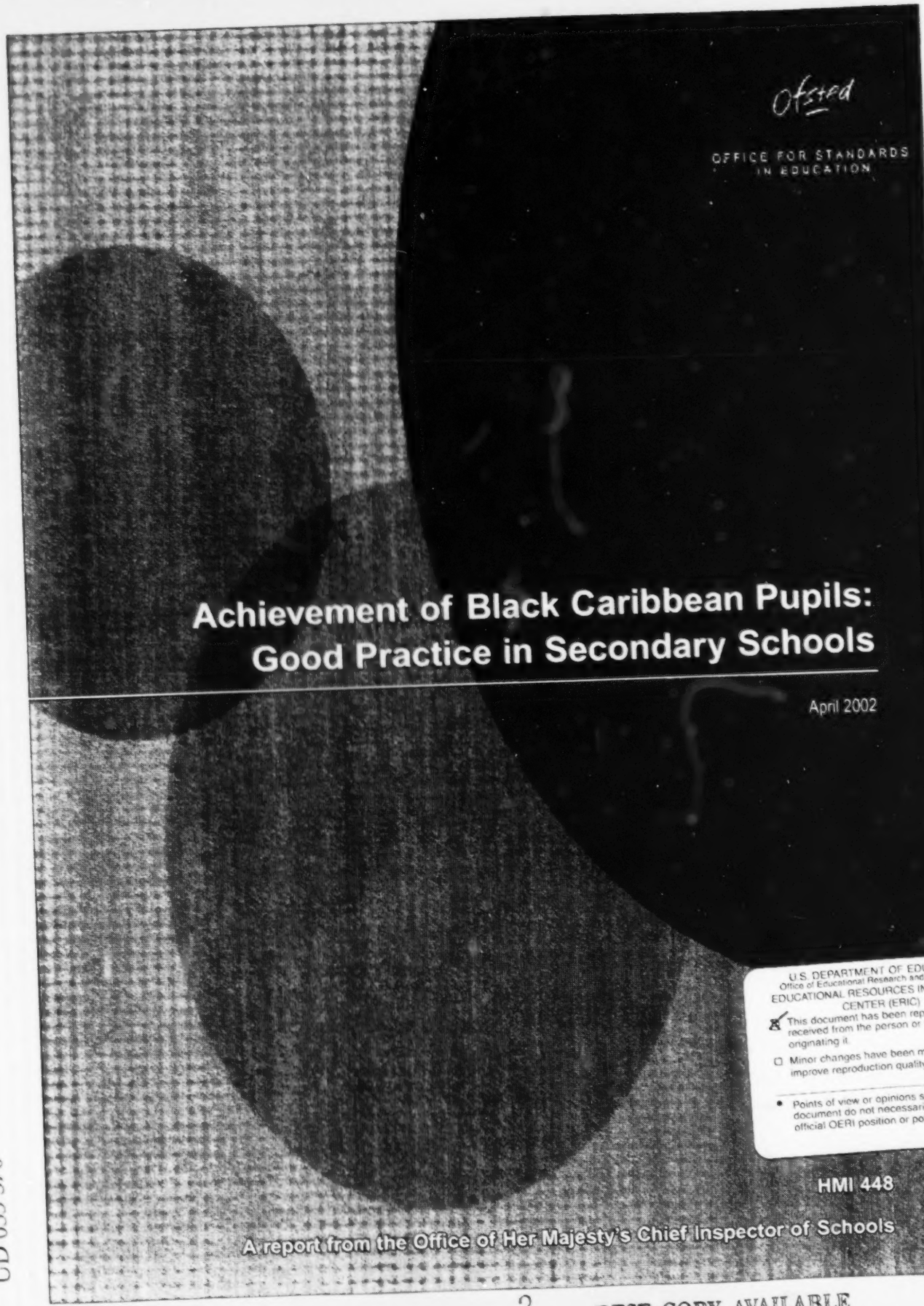

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Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Secondary Schools

April 2002

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Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Good Practice in Secondary Schools

Introduction

1. Just over 50 years ago the *SS Windrush* brought the first of what were to be thousands of black people from the Caribbean recruited to work in Britain after the Second World War. They, like black settlers who had arrived before 1948, hoped for a prosperous future for themselves and enhanced educational opportunities for their children. It would be reasonable to expect those hopes to have been realised by now and to assume that the majority of Black Caribbean children in England's schools would be sharing the higher educational standards attained by the most successful pupils in our schools. This is not the case. By 1981 reports such as the *Rampton Report: West Indian Children in Our Schools* (Department for Education and Science, 1981) identified serious concerns about the extent to which schools were meeting the needs of Black Caribbean pupils. The concerns persist.

2. Obtaining accurate data has been difficult over the years. Although many schools have had equal opportunities policies in place for a number of years, few have had systems for analysing the performance of pupils by ethnicity. The picture for many local education authorities (LEAs) is similar.[1]

3. The evidence that has been available from individual LEAs has tended to show that the relative performance of Black Caribbean pupils begins high, starts to decline in Key Stage 2, tails off badly in Key Stage 3 and is below that of most other ethnic groups at Key Stage 4. Such evidence reinforced the findings of detailed studies of schools and LEAs in OFSTED's report, *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: School and LEA Responses* (OFSTED, 1999). A follow-up to that report, *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups*, was published by OFSTED in 2001.

4. Black Caribbean pupils, both girls and boys, also appear to be in trouble in school more often than their peers. For the past six years, the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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1 Where data have been available, they have sometimes categorised a range of ethnic groups as black, making it difficult accurately to establish the relative achievements of pupils whose families originated from the Caribbean. In this report, the term 'Black Caribbean' is used to identify pupils whose families originate from the Caribbean. Dual heritage pupils with one Black Caribbean parent have been included in this group in analysing school data. There has also been a difficulty arising from labelling groups as a whole, regardless of differences between the performance of boys and girls and of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds. The relationship of race, class and gender is explored in a review commissioned by OFSTED, *Educational Inequality – mapping race, class and gender*, David Gillborn and Heidi Safia Mirza (OFSTED, 2000).

(HMCI) has commented on the disproportionate numbers excluded. An OFSTED report, *Improving Attendance and Behaviour in Secondary Schools* (2001), analyses the position in some detail. The rate at which Black Caribbean pupils are excluded from school has declined over the past two years, but, as the latest figures for exclusions from maintained secondary schools demonstrate, they are still over four times more likely to be excluded from school than all pupils nationally.

The survey

5. To establish a fuller basis of information, data from inspections and on attainment and exclusions were analysed for secondary schools with 10% or more Black Caribbean pupils. Based on 2000 data, there were 129 of these schools, which between them cater for about 40% of the Black Caribbean pupil population. These 129 schools are referred to as the 'survey schools'. All the survey schools were asked for information on pupil-level performance from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 by ethnic group. The 47 schools that were able to respond are referred to as the 'sample schools'. The data from them are given in the appendix.

6. Six schools were selected for visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The schools were identified mainly on the basis of relatively good progress made by Black Caribbean pupils between the end of Key Stage 3 and the end of Key Stage 4. These six schools are referred to as the 'schools visited'.

7. HMI initially visited each of the six schools for two days, observing lessons and holding discussions with staff. Return visits in subsequent terms were made to each school to interview Black Caribbean pupils and their parents. HMI evaluated, for each school, how well Black Caribbean pupils were achieving and the factors contributing to this. They considered:

   - the school's curriculum
   - the quality of teaching and learning
   - how the school monitored pupils' performance
   - how it supported and guided the pupils
   - the school's links with parents and the wider community.

8. A report on a parallel study of primary schools is published simultaneously *(Achievement of Black Caribbean Pupils: Three Successful Primary Schools*, OFSTED, 2002).

Main findings

- Pupils of Black Caribbean heritage in the six schools on which this study was based are generally achieving more than Black Caribbean pupils in other schools where they form a high proportion of the school population. The extent of the schools' academic success varies, and Black Caribbean girls do better than boys, but this study shows that Black Caribbean pupils can do well in good schools.

Ethos

- Critical to the success of the schools are leadership and management that gain the confidence of parents and pupils and establish their credibility in the communities they serve.

- The commitment to valuing and including pupils and setting them the challenge of high expectations is fundamental to the schools' work. The progress of pupils is tracked intensively and they are given strong personal support.

Teaching, monitoring and support

- Most of the teaching observed was distinguished by the teachers' positive relationships with pupils. Like others, Black Caribbean pupils respond best in lessons which offer intellectual engagement and where there are well - defined classroom routines and clear outcomes for the work.

- Effective support for pupils involves close oversight of their academic and personal progress. It is based on an incisive analysis of needs, making good use of data and engaging parents effectively. Effective support is backed up by pertinent additional teaching and generous extra-curricular activities.

- There are nevertheless some weaknesses in the schools' practice:

  - teachers do not always demand enough, especially of boys
  - some staff in the schools are more assured in handling questions of ethnicity, gender and achievement than others
  - although in some cases the curriculum and learning resources reflect the diversity of the school, more could be done to enable pupils to learn systematically about other cultures
  - while the monitoring of individual pupils' progress is generally good, more consistent analysis of participation and performance is sometimes needed to pick up patterns across ethnic groups.

Response of parents

- Many Black Caribbean parents interviewed in the study had anxieties about their children's education and their prospects more generally –

anxieties born out of their own sometimes bitter experiences. They warmly appreciated the efforts of the schools to provide a morally supportive environment, to encourage a sense of belonging and to respond positively and energetically to racism.

- Close links with parents are based on shared values and expectations of behaviour, attitudes and habits of work. The schools listen to parents' concerns, are open with them and work with them at resolving differences. Parents' understanding of their children's progress is founded on rigorous discussion, honest reporting and swift contact when important information needs to be shared.

Response of pupils

- The response of Black Caribbean pupils to the expectations of and the support given by the schools was very often, though not always, highly positive. Some pupils, particularly boys, did not respond to efforts to help them.

- What the pupils interviewed for the study appreciated most about their schools was being listened to, valued and supported. They saw the response to black people in wider society as often marked by negativity and discrimination and the notion of 'respect' in school was of critical importance to them.

National picture

- Black Caribbean pupils are not alone among pupils, including white pupils, who are not generally achieving well enough. They tend to be concentrated in schools with large numbers of pupils who face disadvantage. General efforts to improve achievement in these schools are not doing enough to promote higher standards for Black Caribbean pupils, especially boys.

- A symptom of disengagement and friction is that Black Caribbean boys continue to be disproportionately excluded from school, mainly for fighting and for behaviour which challenges the authority of staff. Black Caribbean girls are also disproportionately excluded.

Action

- Building on constructive developments already under way, positive action is urgently needed to:

  - develop the confidence and sophistication of schools in addressing ethnic diversity, including through the effective use of data and through open debate among staff, pupils and parents about barriers to achievement
  - integrate specific action on minority ethnic achievement with mainstream improvement work, setting clear objectives and targets for greater participation and higher attainment
  - improve connections between schools and other local services in joint action on social inclusion.

The schools visited

Characteristics of the schools

9. The six schools visited had all received positive school inspection reports. Leadership and management, the guidance and support of pupils and the general quality of teaching were all rated highly.

10. **St Thomas the Apostle College** is a boys' 11–18 voluntary-aided comprehensive school in Southwark. It has 750 pupils on roll. About two thirds of the pupil population are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with Black Caribbean pupils forming just under 25%. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average, at 32%. The school had no permanent exclusions in the last reporting year (2000). Its attendance rate was well above the national average.

11. **Our Lady's Convent High School** is a voluntary-aided comprehensive school in Hackney. It is an 11–16 girls' school with a mixed sixth form. There are 616 pupils on roll, coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Black Caribbean pupils form 16% of the school population. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 25%, above the national average. The school had one permanent exclusion in 2000. Its attendance rate was well above the national average.

12. **St Martin-in-the-Fields High School** is a comprehensive girls' 11–16 school in Lambeth. It has 625 pupils on roll, 88% of the pupil population are of minority ethnic heritage, with Black Caribbean pupils forming 33% of the school population. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 36.5%, well above the national average. The school had no permanent exclusions in 2000. Attendance was broadly in line with the national average.

13. **Heath Park High School** is a mixed 11–18 comprehensive school serving an ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged area of Wolverhampton. There are 1,032 pupils on roll, 40% of the pupil population are of minority ethnic backgrounds, with Black Caribbean pupils forming nearly 25% of the school population. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 30%, is above the national average. The school had no permanent exclusions in 2000. Attendance was broadly in line with the national average.

14. **Winchmore School** is a mixed 11–18 comprehensive school, serving pupils in Enfield and other north London boroughs. There are 1,403 pupils on roll from a range of ethnic groups. Black Caribbean pupils form 14% of the pupil population. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average,

at 26.9%. There were 11 permanent exclusions in 2000. The attendance rate was broadly in line with the national average.

15. **St Bonaventure's School** is an 11–18 boys' voluntary-aided comprehensive school in Newham. There are 1,168 pupils on roll. The school is ethnically mixed, with Black Caribbean pupils forming 14% of the pupil population. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, at 26%. There were two permanent exclusions in 2000. The rate of attendance was well above the national average.

Attainment

16. Table 1 shows the attainment of pupils in 2001 in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or in General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) for the six schools, compared with the data returned by the sample schools with high proportions of Black Caribbean pupils. (See appendix for detailed data on these schools.) Table 2 gives the breakdown for Black Caribbean boys and girls compared with others in the schools.

Table 1

2001 data	Schools visited			Sample schools		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Average points	41.4	45.2	43.0	34.1	36.2	35.2
% 5+ A*-C	53	62	57	37	45	41
% 5+ A*-G	97	98	98	89	92	91
% 1+ A*-G	99	100	99	97	98	98

Table 2

2001 data		Schools visited			Sample schools		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Average points	Black Caribbean	34.5	41.0	37.3	28.7	33.9	31.5
	All other pupils	43.1	46.2	44.5	35.4	36.9	36.2
% 5+A*-C	Black Caribbean	36	57	45	22	39	31
	All other pupils	58	63	60	40	47	44
% 5+A*-G	Black Caribbean	97	99	98	89	93	91
	All other pupils	98	98	98	89	92	90
% 1+A*-G	Black Caribbean	99	100	99	96	99	97
	All other pupils	99	100	99	97	98	98

17. The data show that:

- the performance of all pupils across the six schools visited is better than the national average and is well above the average for schools with similar levels of free school meals
- Black Caribbean pupils in these schools make good progress in the secondary years and do considerably better at GCSE than Black Caribbean pupils in the sample schools – although they still do relatively less well than other pupils in the schools visited
- Black Caribbean girls in the six schools out-perform Black Caribbean boys, but the boys do much better than the Black Caribbean boys in the sample schools.

Ethos

Basis of success

18. The ethos of each of the schools visited was firmly based on the expectation that all pupils would strive to achieve their best in both the formal curriculum and other school activities. The mission statements of the voluntary-aided schools suggested also that a community of faith is capable of providing a strong foundation for achievement.

19. In all the schools, the headteachers, supported by staff and governors, had formulated policies which interpreted the school's values in practical ways. To ensure consistency of approach, materials such as the school development plan and staff handbooks were key working documents. They gave practical guidance to teachers and made clear what pupils were expected to do in all aspects of their school lives.

20. The extent of the schools' success in all parts of the provision and with various parts of their pupil populations varied. The inspection found that a consistent and positive tone set by the schools had a direct impact on individual pupils' attitudes in that it helped them to see the purpose of learning and to accept the disciplines which learning entails. The pupils were mostly self-confident and keen to participate in school life, and their willingness contributed to improvements in attendance, behaviour and learning. It was also clear, however, that variations from the positive tone on the part of a few staff could risk undermining the efforts of the rest.

21. A very prominent feature of successful management in most of the schools was the monitoring of pupils' progress, including by ethnicity. The data enabled senior staff to have the confidence to challenge assumptions about and attitudes to pupils' performance. Where staff focused on meeting individual needs but did not explore patterns within and between groups, they failed to notice anomalies in participation and achievement.

22. Analysis of patterns of participation and achievement benefited all pupils. For example, as a result of monitoring by ethnicity, one school identified that staying-on rates at 16 were lowest among white girls. The school took the initiative, discussing with parents at an earlier stage their daughters' future careers. The staying-on rate for this group increased as a result of the positive steps subsequently taken.

23. A second example was the setting up of Saturday and holiday classes. These were established after analysing performance data and taking into account discussions with the parents about the

support their children needed. The classes kept pupils engaged as well as helping those parents who had difficulty in supporting their children with their GCSE work. Black Caribbean parents in particular commented positively on this initiative, feeling that it kept their children focused on achievement.

Climate for learning

24. The six schools had managed to establish a learning environment which was, for the most part, calm, purposeful and business-like, but also relaxed and sociable. Pupils moved around the buildings sensibly. Staff and prefects supervised pupils with little need to enforce expectations.

25. The language with which pupils were addressed by staff was a significant feature. It was straightforward and measured, often lightened by humour and recognition of pupils' interests and the activities they were engaged in. The language was never patronising or harsh; soured relationships were avoided by not using verbal 'put-downs', sarcasm or personal criticism as a means of control. Pupils and staff could bring to mind few exceptions.

26. Praise was common in these schools. Reward systems were prominent, giving tangible manifestation of the schools' values and their appreciation of the pupils. Where these systems were most effective, pupils had targets to aim at. Opportunities for pupils to participate and to take responsibility were an important part of the best lessons seen as well as of the general life of the school. They developed pupils' personal qualities, including leadership and teamwork.

27. Relationships between pupils from different ethnic groups were friendly in and out of lessons. There was a great deal of mixing, socially and in class, and no evidence of friction between ethnic groups. Staff and pupils could remember hardly any incidents of a racist nature in the school. The schools had formal systems for logging and investigating such incidents.

28. Lunchtime and after-school activities by staff helped to form strong relationships with pupils outside the formal classroom setting. Pupils felt such opportunities to be of great value. Often the relationships formed with particular staff on such occasions meant that pupils developed a closer identification with the school.

What parents thought

29. HMI interviewed 60 parents of Black Caribbean pupils at the schools. The pupils, mainly aged 16 and over, had different levels of achievement. Their parents reflected a very wide range of social and economic circumstance. Over three quarters had been born in Britain; the rest had arrived as young children from the Caribbean. All had attended urban schools at a time when they felt that people

were less sensitive to or aware of the needs of Black Caribbean children. All had sharp and often painful memories of not being accepted as belonging in their schools or in the local community they served.

30. Most parents had worked to improve their own qualifications and job prospects, with some having undertaken further study to demonstrate the importance of learning to their children. All talked of the need for strong networks of family and friends to be able to support their children. A high percentage belonged to a supportive church group.

31. The parents had very clear views about the effects of negative features in their own schooling. From personal experience, they understood what racism could do. They were acutely conscious of what such experiences had done to others, and were aware of the dangers for Black Caribbean youngsters dropping out of, or being excluded from, school. As a result, they had worked hard to ensure their children had a good start in the system. Many had invested in early pre-school provision for their children, and some had paid for private coaching in subjects such as mathematics, English and French.

32. Parents saw themselves as strict, but not rigid about their children going out after school and at weekends. Their children tended to agree, and accepted that the arrangements made by their parents for them to study after school and to check their homework were right.

33. A recurring theme in discussion with parents was the desire to keep their children away from 'street culture' – defined as hanging around with nothing to do. They were aware of the temptations of 'the street' and, in particular, the attractions of money gained easily through crime. Parents were determined that their children would adopt a perspective that valued people not because of what they owned but for their personal qualities. They commented on the dangers of not being around when their children were at home and knew of children who were in difficulties because of lack of parental support.

34. The pictures painted by the parents interviewed – and confirmed by their children – were of families committed to each other, typified by the comment of one pupil:

> *'My mum guides me. She's not overpowering and she is a good role model. She is a nurse and single, because my dad died. She has to support my brother – who was thrown out of school – and myself. He's really doing better now he is at college. My mum, my aunts and cousins and the school keep me focused.'*

Choosing a secondary school

35. The selection of a secondary school for Black Caribbean parents is as exacting as it is for many parents. Many had been prepared to have their children travelling long distances to get a good education.

On the evidence of the interviews, most were influenced by a range of factors. The way a school's prospectus set out its aims, values and expectations was a factor in the perceptions they formed. Word of mouth, observation of pupils in the street, or an effective presentation at an evening for prospective parents, contributed, in the end, to an intuitive 'feel' for the school they hoped would provide best for their child.

36. With very few exceptions, the parents interviewed were concerned not simply with academic standards but with whether the school was **a morally supportive environment** in which their child could develop. Parents needed to feel reassured that the ethos of the school would reflect the values and expectations of the home. They saw the school's role as supporting their children to face the challenges of life. One parent commented:

> *'I don't expect the school to build up my child. I expect to do that. What I expect the school to do is give her the equipment to succeed and do nothing to undermine what I do.'*

37. The parents were emphatic that they expected the school to treat their children fairly and with respect. They were, to varying degrees, fearful of their children being judged negatively because of their skin colour.

38. The faith dimension was important for most parents selecting denominational schools. There was an expectation that these schools would embrace all of the pupils within the spirit of their religious faith while acknowledging their ethnic identity. Knowing the schools would respect the pupils' ethnic identity reassured the parents that acceptance and tolerance were likely to be definite features of the school ethos.

39. Parents also considered that the outward manifestations of a school's identity – such as the uniform – assisted the pupils in having **a sense of belonging.** Uniform was also seen by the parents as a way of helping their children resist the more negative aspects of 'street culture'. One parent reflected what many expressed when she said:

> *'I don't want him to value people by the labels they wear or what they own. He needs to value people as people. To belong, you have to identify. I don't want him to identify with ragamuffins. He has to know how real people get on in the real world, or he'll end up running the street.'*

40. In the schools where there was a clear understanding with the parents about what a pupil was expected to achieve, there was also a similar consistency in **shared expectations about behaviour, attitude and habits of work.** These emphasised persistence, the importance of achieving as highly as possible and doing one's best. Parents believed strongly in the values of politeness, courtesy,

diligence and helpfulness. They expected the schools to uphold and reinforce these values in their interactions with the pupils.

41. High on the list of important features for parents about their schools was **a positive and energetic response to racism.**

42. One parent starkly illustrated the pressures that many black parents experience and fear. He spoke eloquently of being subject to explicit racial abuse at work and about how his promotion prospects had been blighted by the attitudes of his immediate superiors. He found other employment but these events, by his own admission, soured his relationships with white people in authority for a long time and drove him to the edge of criminality. A positive intervention by a white lecturer while at college helped him to develop a perspective that enabled him to move on. This experience, he felt, has enabled him to understand better the pressures that his and other children face.

> *'My boy is like Daniel in the lions' den. He is in constant danger of being sucked into illegal activities when money is short. Our communities are being undermined by poor employment opportunities. Some parents' supervision of young people is poor and they can't cope. People have to work long hours at times when they need to be at home with their children. When they don't have good support from family and friends they are on their own. You see them struggle to keep their children off the street but once the child knows that fast money can be made from criminal activity especially related to drugs, it becomes hard to hold the line for the rest of us.'*

43. The message from this parent, who spoke with great clarity and conviction, is that, against this backdrop of risk, schools have to give significant and sustained support to children's learning. He was also clear that it was not just schools that needed to be involved.

> *'Teachers need help in learning how to manage the anger and behaviour of some pupils. There are children who are not coping, some have no real back-up at home and their only security are the gangs. Even a good school like my son goes to struggles to counter what goes on outside. The communities around the schools need co-ordinated help from different agencies. We need locally based and locally respected police who can serve the community in more ways than just enforcing the law. There is a need for people who can relate to the situations that young black people find themselves in and who are able to believe in them, trust them and have faith in them to be good.'*

44. The parent was effusive in his praise for what the school was trying to do for his son because, he felt:

> *'They are trying to help my son see that black people can make it, do make it, and to see that those on the bottom, on the street, are ultimately going nowhere.'*

45. Positive relationships between the home and school had, for many, been founded on direct contact between the parent, the headteacher and other key staff. For these Black Caribbean parents, at the heart of this relationship was a willingness on the part of the school **to listen to their concerns, to be honest and open with them and to work with them at resolving differences.**

46. Where relationships were good, the parents reported that staff articulated a sense of purpose and value that they felt they shared, and demanded the best of their children. As one parent said:

> *'We had no choice in the area. If he had gone to [another local school] he would have ended up on the street. They have no discipline there, pupils do as they want, dress as they want, speak as they want and achieve nothing. Here the boys know what's expected of them. Teachers treat them with respect, work them hard and help them. Teachers stay behind and run clubs and activities. They let you know if anything is wrong, try to support you as a parent and never give up on your child.'*

What pupils looked for

47. The factors most important to the pupils interviewed in the survey across the schools were that, to use the phrases very often used, 'teachers give us a lot of support' and 'they listen to what we say'.

48. **To be listened to** was an expectation and a need to which the interviews invariably returned. Pupils expected teachers to be consistent in their willingness to listen to and support them and were quick to point to the effects when teachers were not interested. They also knew that key staff in the school were approachable and would give them a fair hearing when things went wrong.

49. As far as these pupils were concerned, the great majority of staff invariably made clear in practical terms the aims of the school and set expectations that pupils recognised as realistic and supportive. Because of this, teachers could be relaxed, but not slack, in their relationships. They spoke clearly and precisely to pupils in a tone that did not seek to intimidate or threaten. One boy commented:

> *'We have lots of teachers in this school that handle you right. When they deal with you they listen to your point of view and don't jump in. They don't shout at you, or poke you and stuff like that. They don't accuse you of things, they talk to you*

about it and if they get it wrong apologise. They treat you with respect.'

50. For many Black Caribbean pupils the issue of **respect** clearly lay at the heart of their relationship with the school. Being treated courteously and with dignity was central to pupils' sense of themselves. As one girl put it:

> *'This school makes you feel you are a part of it, that you belong. They treat me with respect, take my feelings into account, listen to my opinions and take me seriously as a black young woman.'*

51. The pupils' perceptions about what happens to black people in the wider society act as a filter through which they interpret the world and judge how they are being treated. Both boys and girls – perhaps especially the latter – were articulate and perceptive about how prejudice and ignorance affect black peoples' lives.

52. Many recognised that they had, to a degree, been shielded from the worst effects of this by their families, but were keenly aware of how others had been treated. As a result pupils felt able to 'read' situations, and felt they could recognise injustice which might or might not have a racial dimension.

53. For these pupils it was critical that the school should have **an understanding of their feelings about ethnicity, colour and racism.** Their own understanding of it influenced their relationships and perceptions of others. One pupil described how he saw it:

> *'When I go out I have to remember I am a black youth. Other people see me like that. I have to be careful of what I do, say and how I behave because others are always judging me as a black youth. Not as a youth, but a black youth. If I'm out with my friends we are not seen as a group of friends, but a black gang. Some people think when they see us, we will rob them or something. It gets you down sometimes. If you're black you're not allowed to have a childhood, you know.'*

54. Sensitivities about racism are never far from the surface. Worries that a problem – with a teacher, for example – might have a racial dimension are easily aroused, irrespective of whether there is any evident justification for the suspicion. Even in schools where pupils felt that they were treated with respect, suspicion that some teachers might, because the pupils were black, be making false assumptions about them or ignoring them as individuals were quite frequently expressed.

55. One pupil, for example, wondered whether there was anything behind the failure of a teacher to keep a copy of an examination paper for

her from a lesson she had missed. The pupil's concern was that she appeared to have been forgotten and interpreted as a deliberate slight the way the teacher spoke to her about the matter. The pupils interviewed recognised that misunderstanding about motives is possible but many felt that their suspicions about this kind of experience had a foundation in reality.

56. In one school pupils recalled an incident where a teacher covering a lesson made a comment that they struggled to interpret. 'I know you, you and you. I'm going to keep my eye on you,' they reported him saying, pointing to three Black Caribbean boys. The pupils said that these three boys were sitting quietly waiting for the lesson to begin, and were unsure of what was being implied as none had been in trouble before.

57. The pupils considered that teachers who singled out individuals, especially for ridicule, often had the effect of isolating and alienating those concerned. All resented any teacher who spoke harshly, in a hectoring or dismissive tone. One pupil expressed this in the following way:

> *'If I'm put under too much pressure in public over an issue where I know I am in the right I find it hard to pull back. It gets worse if I think the teacher is making assumptions about me. Sometimes the classes are a bit noisy and teachers raise their voice, but there is no need to come right up close and shout at you, or not let you tell your side of the story. When that happens I get vexed, you know. I know things could get worse so I hang back. I prefer discussions one to one with a teacher who is willing to listen to what you say. They don't have to agree, but they do have to listen. We've got a lot of good teachers in this school but we've also got two who are just ignorant.'*

58. It is impossible to be certain about intentions and motives in reported incidents. What is reported is inevitably a selective and partial interpretation. Nevertheless, the interviews underlined the fact that school experiences tend to be interpreted by pupils in the light of what they have seen, experienced and heard about in wider society. Given this, it is not surprising that pupils struggle sometimes to make sense of teachers' intentions and meaning. Where there is doubt about what is implied, or pupils feel singled out, slighted or ignored, relationships are in danger of becoming corroded, with consequent effects on pupils' belief in what the school is attempting to offer.

59. Positive relationships, on the other hand, enhance pupils' feelings towards school and carry them through times of personal difficulty. **To feel valued and supported** in school was a hope that these pupils were keen to stress – and it was a hope largely realised in their experience. One boy reported:

'In Year 10, I started to fool about and come in late. My tutor was worried and said he wasn't having any of it. He got on my back, he got my mum and dad on my back, he even got my granny on my back, and she is a big woman. He said there was no way he was giving up on me so I'd better surrender. He's a good guy. He cares and that makes me feel good, you know.'

60. Some of the pupils were quick to say that their attitude and application to work had not always been of the model kind; there had been crises. All appreciated the way that the majority of staff stuck by them, come what may. They were also sanguine, usually, in their acceptance of a small number of teachers who were less supportive. The support, acceptance and concern given both by school and home gave pupils the determination to try to achieve their best and make something of themselves in school and in the future.

'I like the vibes of the place. I want to come to school to achieve, it is a friendly atmosphere. We are all as one but from different backgrounds. The school really wants me to do my best. So do I.'

Action to raise achievement

The curriculum

61. The curriculum offered by the schools visited is, on the surface, little different from that offered by most secondary schools. Most offer little representation of different cultures in the curriculum beyond religious education and a limited range of topics in other subjects, such as the civil rights movement in America, and a variety of literature in a GCSE English syllabus.

62. In some cases, however, the curriculum had been designed more consciously to inform young people about an ethnically diverse world. There is a clear appreciation and approval of the Black Caribbean and other black pupils in these schools for provision that engages with their cultures and experiences.

63. The curriculum at **St Martin-in-the-Fields** High School aims to enable the girls to explore their identity so that they become confident, personally, academically and socially. Diversity is reflected through a 'one world' approach. The art teachers, for example – artists in their own right – bring into school other artists of minority ethnic heritage to provide a breadth of experience. A similar approach is taken in music. Several departments, including English, art, geography, history, music and personal, social and health education (PSHE), affirm aspects of diversity through displays on particular countries or regions. These link to evening events which enable staff, pupils and their parents to explore themes of cultural similarity and difference. The approach is integral to the school's thinking and fundamental to what it seeks to do in developing young people.

64. The curriculum at **St Bonaventure's** is of conventional subject-based design, with a substantial after-hours programme providing enrichment. Threaded through it are opportunities for pupils to extend experience and skills:

- a number are given the opportunity to attend the Catholic Association for Racial Justice conference each year
- the religious education curriculum recognises the diversity of worship traditions within Catholicism and other religions
- through residential attendance at a university's annual Black Science Enrichment Programme, the boys involved learn to understand that careers in science are open to them and what they need to do to gain access to them
- the school rich extra-curricular provision includes sports not much catered for in the local community, such as golf and sailing, as well as many music and drama opportunities, homework and Saturday clubs and study support in the holidays.

65. Another feature is well-planned action across the curriculum to improve literacy, including support for independent reading, the extensive use of reading in lessons, and specific teaching of the techniques of writing in subject contexts.

66. The Key Stage 4 curriculum offers two specialised programmes, one focusing on outdoor education with a further education college link, and one offering a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) Intermediate Information Technology course.

67. The school's structure of support gives very close attention to ensuring that pupils routinely give the best that they can. The school uses a range of remedies if they do not. Poor application or behaviour can lead, for example, to removal from a sports team. Failure to fulfil potential leads to immediate identification of the problem and quick intervention to put matters right.

68. **Heath Park** responded to the popularity of GNVQ Intermediate Information Technology by enabling those who were unable to take it in school time to be offered the opportunity out of school hours. The curriculum for about 20% of Year 11 involves disapplication from modern foreign languages in order to enable them to take the option.

Race and ethnicity in the curriculum

69. The question of how far the curriculum should reflect issues about race and ethnicity was debated in the schools. Some pupils felt such matters were best left alone as they could raise too many difficult issues with other pupils and for the teachers. Many pupils thought that separate black history courses could lead to unintended consequences for other ethnic groups, and they did not want those. They felt that the curriculum should be influenced more subtly so that issues could be considered routinely from Year 7, perhaps in PSHE and religious education lessons.

70. On the other hand, a number of pupils, as well as some staff, felt that history, for example, should do more to tackle controversial issues if young people were to feel confident at dealing with challenges to their identity and aspirations encountered in society at large. They argued that, despite personal ambition and determination to do well, the lack of representation in wider society of the Black Caribbean community – especially in political and educational life – acted as an inhibition and that the curriculum needed to take such factors into account.

71. All of the schools had a clear and strong commitment to the ethnic and cultural diversity of their pupils, but most had not carried out a systematic enough analysis of what the curriculum could do to reflect it. There was, as a result, a mismatch between the curriculum on offer and the aims they wanted to achieve in relation to the understanding and appreciation of diversity. The curriculum generally did not do enough to explore the connections that link

individuals to a variety of local, national and international points of reference which, collectively, help to define personal and community identity.

72. Some staff in the schools argued that planning the curriculum in this way was too complicated, as well as, possibly, too risky. That it is not necessarily either complicated or risky was illustrated in an excellent French lesson at **Heath Park** School where the teacher used the web site of Arsenal Football Club, with its contingent of black star players from France and francophone Africa, to challenge attitudes about black boys speaking modern languages.

Teaching and learning

73. Visits to lessons across all of the schools regularly demonstrated teachers' sensitivity in their relationships with, among others, Black Caribbean pupils. There was plenty of good teaching and much very good teaching to be found. Characteristic of it was high-quality formal and informal dialogue between teacher and pupils. Relationships were crucial to whether lessons worked well or did not. Discussions with pupils revealed, too, how fragile a matter successful learning can be for many whose confidence is low, and how many staff are managing to intervene with sensitivity and, often, firmness, in supporting them.

74. Intellectual engagement, astutely managed by knowledgeable and confident subject teachers, was a very significant feature of the most successful classrooms. In a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson at **St Thomas the Apostle,** such a teacher had a detailed knowledge of all the pupils' strengths and weaknesses derived from good assessment information. She made clear what was to be learnt and why; and, as the lesson progressed, she focused on the pupils' understanding through their responses in groups and maintained a fast pace, checking constantly to ensure consistent and accurate use of technical words. She also took opportunities to refer to examination techniques, study skills and revision methods. She made it clear which pupils she required to see at lunchtime mathematics club – an invitation not to be ignored – whilst at the same time letting everyone know that, of course, the club was open to all. No-one moved when the pips signalled the end of the lesson because concentration on the work in hand was so intense. Such teaching may be unspectacular, but it was highly effective in engaging and challenging pupils fully. It was one instance, among a large number, confirming that confident women teachers can manage classes involving Black Caribbean boys to extremely good effect.

75. In a Year 11 set 3 science lesson at **St Bonaventure's,** the work centred on the boys checking through and discussing the results of an end-of-module test on magnetism and electrostatics. The lesson was well focused and pertinent. The boys reacted very well to being able to see the results of the class over the whole course and to the opportunity to work through the answers. They were keen to improve

and received a good deal of useful advice on how to do so. Subsequently they used a self-study computer program that took them through relevant sections of the syllabus according to need. This was an example of thorough teaching and learning. About 90% of the pupils in the class were set to gain a GCSE grade C in double science.

76. How do the pupils see teaching and teachers? The views of those interviewed were consistent. They wanted teaching that enabled all pupils in a class to understand the topic being taught. They felt that in good lessons everyone was equally valued. This means that approaches that pick out individuals for ridicule or censure – or perhaps even praise which is forced or unctuous – are not rated. The tone of a classroom is important, particularly as regards expectations about behaviour and work routines. The way these are set up is basic to pupils' sense of security, optimism and ease with learning. Pupils appreciate being treated as increasingly mature as they move through a school. As they see it, the teacher's tone should therefore adjust to the age of the pupils.

77. In short, the pupils thought that teachers who help them succeed are **affirmative**, caring about everyone; they are **straightforward**, making themselves available for private discussion if there is a problem; and they are **approachable** in a crisis.

When learning does not happen

78. None of the schools visited experienced major or persistent behaviour problems in classrooms or outside them, and they had done a great deal to reduce the incidence of both permanent and fixed-period exclusions. The work, behaviour and attitudes of the Black Caribbean pupils revealed, nevertheless, some variability, and it is instructive to examine aspects of the less successful learning in a little detail.

79. Features of a minority of such lessons were:

- teachers tended to do too much of the work for the pupils and as a consequence made life too easy, for the boys in particular
- some Black Caribbean boys could be boisterous and impolite, absorbing too great a proportion of the teacher's time
- pupils were sometimes unwilling to make much of an effort and to respond to challenge, accepting a mediocre standard of work and taking the line of least resistance
- pupils struggled to complete coursework and did not avail themselves of the opportunity to attend extra classes put on after school
- pupils were complacent about the likely consequences of inept and inappropriate behaviour and poor application on their examination performance and, in turn, on later post-16 choices.

80. Such situations reflect the difficulty of establishing and maintaining *an appropriate learning culture all day and every day. Where* teachers spoon-feed pupils, either believing this to be the best way to enable them to do as well as possible in their examinations, or because the pupils are reluctant to work hard, it can reinforce the pupils' low expectations of themselves and strip from them the need to take responsibility for their own progress. Some of the pupils thought they were doing perfectly well and had little appreciation of the extent to which they were disadvantaging themselves.

Monitoring and supporting progress

81. Effective schools are assiduous in tracking and supporting pupils who are thought to be in danger of failing to fulfil their potential. **St Martin-in-the-Fields,** for example, has a tutorial system which makes it plain to tutors that their main role is to raise pupils' achievement by helping them address their problems so that 'a culture of excuses' for poor standards ceases to have credibility.

82. The support is sharply focused on the management of learning rather than on attempting to solve perceived personal problems. The tutors work with the heads of key stage to decide who is to be supported, and how. Support can come from a variety of possible sources – the tutor, a learning mentor or any member of staff a pupil feels comfortable with. The system is designed to have maximum flexibility so that, for example, a Year 7 pupil might be helped by a Year 11 tutor if this is appropriate. In Key Stage 4 some pupils can drop an option in order to attend study support where they are helped by learning mentors, non-teaching assistants and subject teachers in maintaining the level of their coursework and homework. The pupils concerned say this support is crucial for them.

83. **St Bonaventure's** is also highly effective in identifying those who need to be referred for additional support. There are numerous sources of support, including tutors, heads of department, senior staff acting as learning mentors, volunteer mentors, a counsellor, the extended learning centre which operates four nights each week, the learning support unit and the special educational needs department. Parents are involved closely, and chased up to be so if need be.

84. An extended after-school learning session seen, lasting for two hours, was well organised and productive. There were 30 boys present – a smaller number than usual because of sports activities that night. The first hour normally consists of taught lessons – in design and technology, modern foreign languages and art on this occasion – as well as individual work supervised by one senior teacher. The second hour is for completion of homework and can involve the use of ICT equipment; this is supervised by two senior teachers.

85. On this occasion 12 boys worked on various homework assignments. Six were using computers (including two who were making excellent use of web sites to research Hooke's Law) and 12 were on assignments on which they needed to catch up. The tutor concentrated on the latter group, which was made up mainly of non-volunteers. The atmosphere was cheerful but work-oriented. The session was managed with confidence and aplomb by a learning mentor, a senior teacher, who appeared to know the background, the interests and the progress of every boy in the school.

86. The school has a highly geared regime of assessment, early intervention, target-setting, mentoring and monitoring. It places pupils in appropriate groups with a great deal of care, and expects pupils to take as many GCSEs as they can manage. Very good use is made of data, with pupils and parents included in decision-making. Action to be taken to support pupils is well founded in evidence, and decisive.

87. The pupils are proud of their school. They see the school as tough but fair in the way it operates, though they can be good-humouredly quizzical about what they perceive to be some of its sterner manners. Compulsory attendance at the extended learning centre is controversial amongst the pupils, but all recognise and appreciate the school's determination to help them. The school insists on effort and concentration; it has well-defined rules, with clear consequences if these are broken. Teachers know the boys well and the boys are never short of people to whom they can talk. Information is shared relentlessly. This rigorously defined, caring and closely focused support for individual pupils makes, over the years, a major difference for many.

Response to support

88. Across all the schools, many Black Caribbean parents spoke of the exceptionally good support offered to their children. The pupils did the same, saying that the schools offer a feeling of community that is reassuring, especially when the going gets tough, for whatever reason. One parent's comment was typical of many:

> *'The school gives my daughter space to develop her personal confidence and reinforces her efforts with praise and support. It engages with her personal desire to do well and builds on my own parental expectations for that to happen.'*

89. It can be a struggle. Another parent told of an incident where her daughter proudly told a Black Caribbean boy she knew in her neighbourhood that she had been given an achievement award in English. The boy's dismissive response ('Don't take any notice of that – we can never achieve in schools – they are all against us') upset and temporarily affected her daughter, leading to a dip in her performance and an attitude that needed to be countered. The positive value system of her daughter's school greatly helped in this, but the incident illustrated how fragile achievement can be, the

negative power of peer-group pressure and what a short step it can be for many pupils from making good progress to falling away badly.

90. Many parents related how their child's progress had been adversely affected by incidents perceived – rightly or wrongly – to be racist in origin. Often, the school and parents had to work hard to help the child manage and recover from such experiences. Vigilance by the school and by the parents in early identification of any potential alienation is clearly vital.

91. Although approaches to the monitoring of attainment are thorough-going in all the schools, this does not, of course, guarantee that pupils will do well. **Heath Park** illustrates the crux of the problem experienced by many schools in relation to the performance of Black Caribbean pupils. The school has sophisticated data-analysis systems that monitor all aspects of attainment by ethnicity and sex. Regular progress reports describe effort and attainment, and the school knows which pupils are in need of support, and in which subjects. The school is beginning to develop tutors as 'learning managers' who are able to use data – including subject by subject predictions for Key Stage 3 and 4 performance – to support the pupils they are responsible for.

92. The system for monitoring achievement goes hand in hand with the pastoral work of the school. The school monitors the progress of borderline GCSE grade C/D pupils in Year 11. Following mock examinations, each pupil targeted agrees a mentor, potentially any adult in the school, who oversees progress at least weekly. All staff take on up to three 'mentees'. The system requires pupils to negotiate subject targets with their teachers (all done in a handy booklet) and to have these regularly signed off by their mentors.

93. The approach has reportedly been very effective with some pupils, but the challenge remains with the most difficult pupils – those least likely to be receptive to support. Some resent the very idea. This includes a number of Black Caribbean pupils. Some simply do not turn up to mentor sessions and homework clubs, and the combined efforts of academic and pastoral support too often find it impossible to pull them through.

94. Schools' systems vary in detail, but many find themselves under strain – whatever the human, organisational and technical resources invested in them – in making sure that their efforts meet with success. The most effective support seen is very dependent on the professional skills, commitment and sheer resolve of the staff who, under strong leadership:

- run well-organised pastoral programmes that provide thorough, good-quality guidance
- as form tutors, support and monitor pupils' personal and academic progress

- act in a variety of mentoring roles
- provide a strong and diverse range of extra-curricular activities
- commit their own time, after school, on Saturdays and during school holidays
- offer a combination of personal warmth, friendliness and strong discipline, consistent over time.

95. The schools are the more successful because their efforts in doing this are part of a broader climate where learning is seen to be of paramount importance, and where teachers, pupils and parents are agreed about this. In such schools there is a feeling that everyone – or more or less everyone – is pulling together to bring this about.

Links with parents

96. It is noteworthy that some of the schools manage to persuade virtually all parents to attend parents' evenings whilst others find it very difficult indeed.

97. **St Martin-in-the-Fields,** successful in this respect, and a school in which Black Caribbean pupils are in the majority, sees the objective of developing a regular and wide-ranging dialogue as being to make sure that the school and parents share a common understanding of values and aspirations. This means that parents receive up-to-date assessments of progress, including estimated grades and information about what needs to be done to achieve them.

98. The Black Caribbean parents are very supportive of classes held on Saturdays and of the wide range of out-of-school activities, but the school has worked hard to develop the trust especially of the considerable number who have had poor personal experiences of education and who are somewhat sceptical about or intimidated by the idea of school. The school has, for example, offered evenings for the parents on the management of pupils' behaviour and its impact on learning, and is quick to alert the parents if a pupil's learning is being adversely affected.

99. When dialogue between parents and the school is productive, it is about both attainment and personal development, and not limited to formal exchanges or to occasions when poor behaviour arises. Sometimes dialogue is difficult because a minority of parents absent themselves from occasions such as parents' evenings, and some do not respond even to the offer of a private consultation at a mutually convenient time. The schools visited all work very hard at this.

100. The schools still have steps to take in their communications with parents – for example, in some cases, in the quality of their reporting. One problem is getting target-setting right. Targets in reports can sometimes be unhelpful – for example when a pupil is advised to

'improve your essay writing style', with no sign of any expectation that this should be taught systematically in the classroom.

101. Another problem is that, in misguided efforts to encourage Black Caribbean or other pupils to do better, teachers can sometimes use superlatives in their reporting to describe what are worthy efforts, but mediocre performance. Several parents commented that they felt misled by the school when informed that their children would be likely to attain low-level grades when previously they have received glowing accounts of progress. The pupils sometimes tell a similar story. Good parental links require honest reporting and swift contact over all important matters, both about problems and successes.

Leadership and management

102. The quality of management and leadership at all levels within the schools is generally good and in some cases outstanding. The headteachers are well supported by governors in defining and furthering the aims and aspirations of the schools.

103. The management of staffing is seen as particularly crucial by all the schools. With a turnover of a third of the staff over the past three years, **St Bonaventure's** has been able to attract new, committed teachers, despite general recruitment difficulties in the area. The process has involved a measure of 'head-hunting' and the appointment of teachers perceived to be strong even when there is no immediate vacancy in a particular discipline. Half the staff are under 30, but the school gains essential stability from a nucleus of highly experienced staff. The headteacher has been in the school for 15 years and the learning mentors – senior teachers in this school – for over 20 years each. The commitment asked of staff in such a school is considerable. Almost all staff run two out-of-school activities, a responsibility undertaken willingly. A good staff development programme supports the maintenance of the school's aims and in particular the crucial induction of its regular intakes of newly qualified teachers.

104. Staff continuity and consistency of purpose make a very considerable difference in these schools. Where teachers are made to feel that their work contributes to collective, constructive work to maintain and improve the school's achievements, they tend to want to stay. This is the case, for example, at **Heath Park**. The challenge in this school is to engage all of the pupils, especially the Black Caribbean pupils, whose attainment continues to give rise to concern – but it is a challenge that the staff are very keen to undertake collectively.

105. The proportion of Black Caribbean adults – teaching and non-teaching – in the schools varies widely. In one school with about a third of the pupils we Black Caribbean, a similar proportion of teaching staff is from the same background, including the headteacher. There are smaller proportions of Black Caribbean

teachers in most of the schools, as well as non-teaching and administrative staff. Three of the schools had black staff in senior management positions. Some of the schools had been successful in drawing in black people from business and other settings to act as mentors.

106. Asked if having black teachers made a difference, the boys in one school felt that black teachers 'knew where you were coming from' but that good teaching skills, understanding and the ability to listen were the most important ingredients for any effective teacher. This message was reinforced by the parents. As one said:

> *'I want to see more black teachers but I don't want to see a situation where you can't be a teacher here unless you are black. I want to see evidence of the system challenging the negativities of an old country with old values.'*

107. Nevertheless, the value for a school in being able to employ effective Black Caribbean staff is not to be underestimated. They offer, in addition to their specific expertise, role models within the school community that Black Caribbean pupils can see and emulate.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

108. The OFSTED report of 2001, *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups*, records encouraging signs of improvement in the way schools and LEAs are addressing minority ethnic under-achievement generally. However, the signs of improvement in this respect do not mean that familiar patterns of differential achievement among ethnic groups are ceasing to exist.

109. The analysis for this report of rates of attainment and exclusion in schools with high proportions of Black Caribbean pupils confirms the persistence of a serious problem, particularly, but not only among boys.

110. The earlier report pointed to the continuing need to analyse and disseminate effective action to address the under-achievement of particular minority ethnic groups. The six schools which are the focus of this report provide, from their varying contexts and histories, positive messages about what can be done, not only for Black Caribbean youngsters but for other groups, including white youngsters, at risk of under-achievement.

111. These are popular schools with strong leadership and strong systems. They have a culture of achievement. Central to their work are high expectations and the provision of intensive support so that pupils meet them. The hope expressed by the schools – that all pupils will do their best – is pursued through practice that is rigorous in design. Teachers value pupils and give them time. The great majority of, though not all, Black Caribbean pupils respond well to the expectations the schools set and the close attention they provide.

112. A particular strength of the schools is their communication with parents. They set out and debate their values and expectations of attitudes and habits of work. Warm approbation for the efforts made by the schools their children were attending was almost universal among the parents interviewed, though sometimes not without qualification.

113. Parents know and appreciate what the schools do to provide a supportive, moral environment, to counter the pressures of 'street culture', to encourage a sense of belonging and to make a positive response to racism. Parents' understanding of their children's progress draws on a rigorous and honest discussion and swift contact between home and school when important information needed to be shared. The schools listen to their concerns, are open with them and work with them at resolving differences and problems.

114. How do we help more schools to achieve success like this? There are three broad ways in which more deliberate and concerted action at national, local and school levels could be pursued.

115. The first is **to develop the confidence and sophistication of schools in approaching ethnic diversity.**

116. One key to this is the analysis of data. The use of data analysed by ethnicity continues to be a weakness in schools, and sometimes in LEAs. The revised guidance from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to schools and LEAs on ethnic monitoring should improve the position, but there is a continued need to prompt the effective use of data effectively to focus attention and resources.

117. Along with the need for good use of data comes the need for open debate in schools and with parents and the wider community about barriers to achievement and responses to schools. What do staff, pupils and parents think about barriers to achievement? Where does 'race' sit in this school alongside the other dimensions of sex, culture, religion and class? What should be done in school to discuss attitudes and responses and to address discrimination? Which strategies are likely to achieve results? OFSTED's guidance on educational inclusion and school inspection, *Evaluating Educational Inclusion: Guidance for inspectors and schools* (2000), provides a way of structuring such an analysis.

118. This is complicated and sensitive territory and many schools in ethnically diverse areas are plainly nervous about opening up such debate for fear of making things worse. The fact that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 expects schools to take positive steps to eliminate barriers to achievement and to promote good relations between ethnic groups is a chance to be taken in this respect.

119. The second matter on which to focus is **how to integrate specific action on minority ethnic achievement within mainstream improvement initiatives.** One clear, and very familiar, message from the success of these schools is that action on minority ethnic achievement is not something to be pursued as an after-thought or by a few committed people: it needs to be central to the school's basic systems and approaches and made relevant to all staff. Clear objectives and targets for higher participation and achievement need to be set on the basis of a comprehensive plan of action, backed by training for all staff.

120. Where the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is available, it gives a basis for this development. Aside from this, there is scope for more deliberate signalling, encouragement and exemplification of good practice in responding to ethnic diversity within broad improvement initiatives. The introduction of more support for the management of behaviour and the improvement of attitudes through the use of

mentors and learning support units (or in-school centres) is one example. There is also more to be done here on the ways in which the curriculum can reflect a diverse society.

121. The third issue – and the one on which work has been least systematic to date – is **to improve connections between schools and other local services in joint action on social inclusion.** The national strategy for neighbourhood renewal highlights the need for more to be done across the public services to focus on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups as a matter of basic principle and routine. Schools are receiving less help than they need in this respect and many schools in ethnically diverse areas are under great pressure as a result.

Recommendations

122. In summary, the recommendations emerging from this study are that schools should:

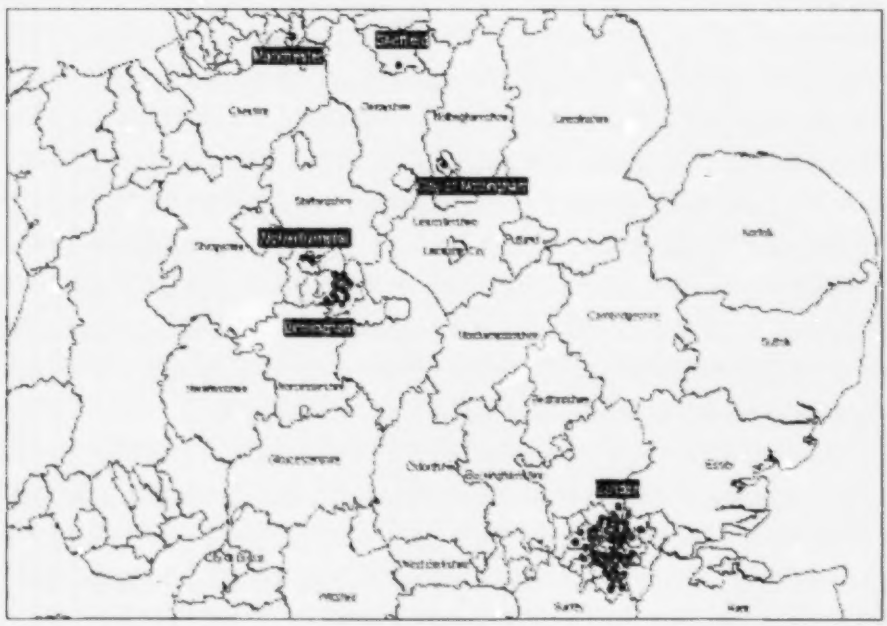
- use data analysed by ethnicity to check the participation and achievement of ethnic groups
- gather and debate the views of staff, pupils, parents and the wider community about barriers to achievement and responses to school
- focus sharply in their response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act on what can be done through the curriculum, teaching, assessment and guidance to remove barriers to achievement and to reflect ethnic and cultural diversity
- set clear objectives and targets for improving participation and achievement based on a comprehensive whole-school plan and using the opportunities represented by mainstream improvement initiatives
- provide access for all staff to high-quality training so that the needs of minority ethnic pupils can be tackled with confidence.

Appendix: Attainment and exclusions

Schools with high proportions of Black Caribbean pupils

1. The 129 survey schools with 10% or more Black Caribbean pupils have the following characteristics:

   - the average proportion of Black Caribbean pupils in them is 17%, compared to 1.4% in secondary schools nationally
   - most of these schools serve areas of relatively high socio-economic deprivation, with almost two thirds of the schools having more than 35% of pupils eligible for free school meals, and only five with eligibility below the national average
   - the majority are community schools but nearly a quarter are aided Roman Catholic and one in eight are aided Church of England schools, a higher proportion of aided secondary schools than nationally
   - about a third are single-sex schools, a higher proportion than nationally
   - over half have an 11–16 age range, also a higher proportion than nationally
   - the majority are in inner and outer London LEAs, with the rest in metropolitan and unitary authorities.



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Attainment

2. The performance of pupils in the 129 survey schools, compared with that in other groups of schools, is shown in table 3. (This features data from the 2001 national data set; data returned by the sample schools may not be identical to that provided in the national data set.) Table 3 indicates that:

   - the pupils in the survey schools on average perform less well than in schools nationally
   - they perform better than pupils in other schools with over 21% free school meal entitlement
   - boys' performance in the survey schools is very similar to the performance of boys in schools with 21% + free school meals, whilst girls' performance is somewhat higher.

Table 3

2001 data	Survey schools			Schools above 21% FSM			Schools above 35% FSM			All maintained schools		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
average points	28.9	35.3	32.2	28.2	33.1	30.6	26.0	30.5	28.2	36.4	41.6	39.0
% 5 A*-C	27	39	33	26	35	31	22	30	26	43	53	48
% 5 A*-G	83	89	86	83	87	85	80	84	82	89	92	90
%1 A*-G	93	96	95	93	94	93	92	93	92	95	96	96

Data on the attainment of Black Caribbean pupils

3. There is much, therefore, about the overall pattern of results in these schools which is creditable. What is worrying is that, in many schools, Black Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, along with pupils from some other backgrounds, are not sharing in the trend of improvement.

4. Pupil-level GCSE/GNVQ results in 2001 were analysed from 47 of the 129 schools which were able to furnish it. The 47 sample schools are broadly representative of the 129 survey schools in terms of their size, sex, status, age-range, free school meals entitlement and location. However, it is important to note that the performance of all pupils in the sample schools in GCSE/GNVQ examinations was better in 2001 than the survey schools as a whole. The trend of the GCSE results in the sample schools from 1997 was also higher than in the survey schools, and above the national trend.

5. The performance of Black Caribbean pupils in the sample schools is shown in table 4. While some individual pupils in virtually all the

schools performed very well, table 4 indicates that Black Caribbean boys performed considerably less well than other boys (notably in relation to the proportion gaining five or more A*-C grades). Black Caribbean girls performed less well than other girls, but the difference was much less.

Table 4

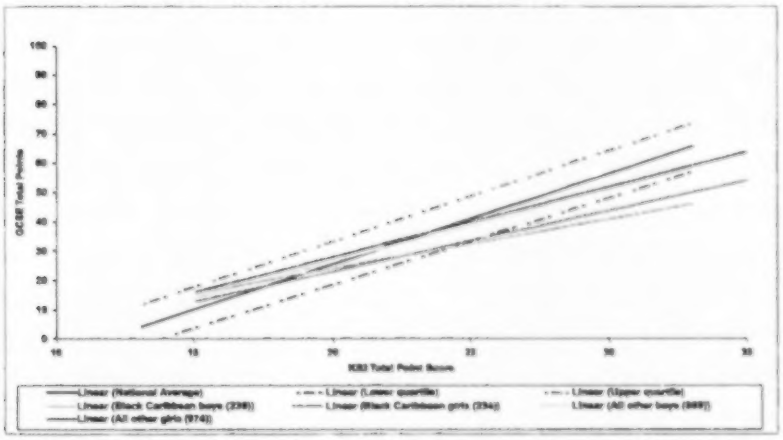
2001 data	Sample schools	Boys	Girls	All
Average points	Black Caribbean pupils	28.7	33.9	31.5
	All other pupils	35.4	36.9	36.2
% 5-A*-C	Black Caribbean pupils	22	39	31
	All other pupils	40	47	44
% 5-A*-G	Black Caribbean pupils	89	93	91
	All other pupils	89	92	90
% 1-A*-G	Black Caribbean Pupils	96	99	97
	All other pupils	97	98	98

6. Figure 1 shows the progress of pupils in the sample schools from Key Stage 2 to GCSE. The sample covers only those pupils for whom data were complete. The sample of Black Caribbean pupils is small, at under 500, and should not be taken as representative of the national picture. The graph sets the Key Stage 2 tests average points score in 1996 (with 27 points being the expected level) against GCSE points score in 2001 (for which the national average was 39 points).

7. The graph indicates that:

   - Black Caribbean boys progressed significantly less well than all other boys in the sample schools, with the difference widening the higher the Key Stage 2 score
   - Black Caribbean girls also progressed significantly less well than all other girls.

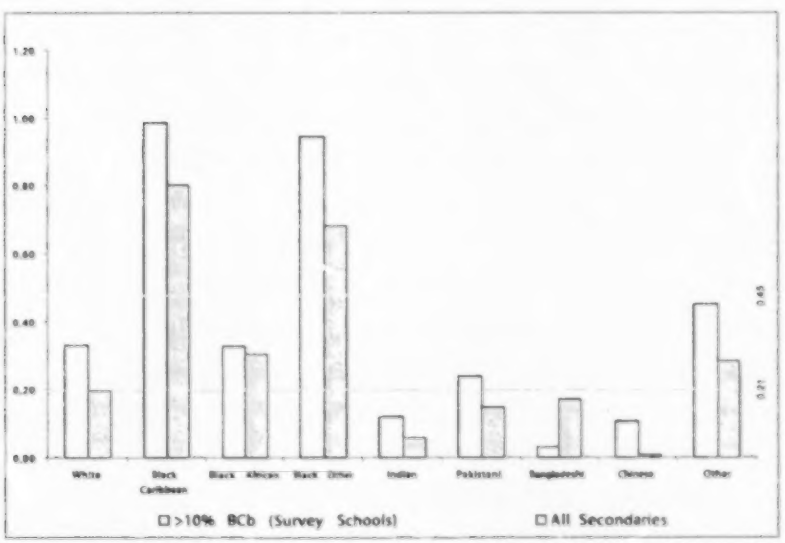
Figure 1: Key Stage 2 to GCSE progress for Black Caribbean and all other pupils by gender



Exclusions

8. Figure 2 shows the rates of permanent exclusion by ethnic group in the survey schools. The rate of permanent exclusions in the survey schools is 0.45%, compared to a national figure of 0.2%. As a proportion of the Black Caribbean pupil population the permanent exclusion rate is 0.99%, very much higher than all other groups except 'Black Other'.

Figure 2: Percentage of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools by ethnicity, 1999/2000



9. Analysis of exclusions by sex indicates that both Black Caribbean girls and Black Caribbean boys are excluded proportionally more often than others.

10. About a quarter of the survey schools account for almost two thirds of permanent exclusions in these schools, while a quarter of the schools do not permanently exclude any pupil.

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